

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 335

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, IR, IZ

SUBJECT: IRAN- IRAQ NEGOTIATIONS

REF: TEHRAN 2915; 2990

1. SUMMARY: IRAQI INTEREST IN DETENTE WITH IRAN HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF DISCREET SOUNDINGS AMONG SELECT EMBASSIES FOR PAST TWO MONTHS. IRAQ WISHES TURKEY TO BE INTERMEDIARY AND TURKEY APPARENTLY WILLING TO OBLIGE DESPITE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTIES. IF WAY COULD BE FOUND TO BRING ABOUT DETENTE, IT COULD ENHANCE IRAQI POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE, IN SAME WAY IPC SETTLEMENT ENHANCED ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE. THERE IS REAL DOUBT HERE, HOWEVER, WHETHER IRAN IS SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN DETENTE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING PAST TWO MONTHS I LEARNED FROM BOTH FRENCH AND ALGERIAN AMBASSADORS THAT HIGH IRAQI OFFICIALS HAD HINTED TO NEW TURKISH AMBASSADOR NAZIF CUHRUK THAT IRAQ WOULD LIKE TURKEY TO BE INTERMEDIARY IN EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF DETENTE WITH IRAN. ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR, WHO WELL CONNECTED WITH REGIME, STRESSED THAT TIME WAS RIPE FOR DETENTE AND THAT TURKEY IDEAL COUNTRY TO ACT AS INTERMEDIARY. HE ALSO THOUGHT SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO SEE DETENTE.

3. ON APRIL 18 I DISCUSSED MATTER INFORMALLY WITH TURKISH
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AMBASSADOR WHO VERIFIED THAT IRAQ APPARENTLY SERIOUS ABOUT DETENTE AND SAID TURKEY HAD ALREADY TAKEN SOME STEPS TO BRING PARTIES TOGETHER. IT SEEMS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT TURKS HELPED SET UP GENEVA MEETING. AMBASSADOR CUHRUK THOUGHT

PROCESS WOULD BE DIFFICULT AND TIME CONSUMING BUT WORTH TURKEY' S BEST EFFORTS. HE SAID IRAQIS DID NOT WANT SOVIETS TO ACT AS INTERMEDIARY.

4. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT MAJOR ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED IS SHATT AL- ARAB AND IRAN' S UNILATERAL ABROGATION OF 1937 TREATY. BAATH REGIME CANNOT ACCEPT ABROGATION AS FAIT ACCOMPLI BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN SURRENDERING IRAQI TERRITORY THAT HAD BEEN OBTAINED BY NURI SAID. TURKISH AMBASSADOR SUSPECTS IRAQ WOULD BE WILLING TO AGREE TO NEW TREATY THAT RECOGNIZED DE FACTO SITUATION, BUT ONLY IF IRAN FIRST DECLARED ITS WILLINGNESS TO RESCIND UNILATERAL ABROGATION AND NEGOTIATE NEW TREATY. WITH REGARD TO KURDISH PROBLEM, WHICH IS PROBABLY PRINCIPAL REASON FOR IRAQ' S DESIRE FOR DETENTE, TURKISH AMBASSADOR' S FEELING IS THAT IT BETTER LEFT ASIDE FOR TIME BEING SINCE IT IS MOST LONG STANDING AND INTRACTABLE BILATERAL ISSUE. CONTINUING PROPAGANDA AND SUBVERSION BY BOTH SIDES IS OTHER MAIN ISSUE. MORATORIUM ON SUCH ACTIVITY WOULD BE GOOD WAY FOR EACH SIDE TO DEMONSTRATE ITS SERIOUSNESS. FINALLY, THERE IS GENERAL SKEPTICISM HERE THAT SHAH SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN DETENTE WITH IRAQ. HAVING SUCH A NASTY, SOVIET- ORIENTED NEIGHBOR NOT ONLY MAKES HIM LOOK GOOD, BUT HELPS JUSTIFY HIS LARGE MILITARY EXPENDITURES.

5. COMMENT: I BELIEVE DETENTE WOULD BE IN U. S. INTEREST. IRAQ IS INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS TO GET ON WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DETENTE WOULD ENCOURAGE THIS TREND. THIS IS NOT TO SAY BAATH REGIME WOULD NOT CONTINUE TO BE ANTI- AMERICAN, RADICALLY ARAB NATIONALISTIC, AND AMBITIOUS TO SPREAD BAATH DOCTRINE THROUGHOUT PERSIAN GULF. IT COULD MEAN, HOWEVER, A LOOSENING OF TIES, PARTICULARLY MILITARY TIES, WITH USSR AND FURTHER ENHANCEMENT OF IRAQ' S INDEPENDENCE. WHILE ANY U. S. ROLE IN ENCOURAGING DETENTE IS OUT OF QUESTION IN IRAQ, IT MAY BE THAT AT APPROPRIATE MOMENT U. S. COULD INFLUENCE SHAH TO MEET IRAQ' S LEGITIMATE DEMANDS. FOR EXAMPLE, ON QUESTION OF NEW SHATT AL- ARAB TREATY, PERHAPS
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SHAH COULD BE PERSUADED TO NEGOTIATE NEW TREATY IN SECRET AND IF SUITABLE OUTCOME OBTAINED, MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL OF UNILATERAL ABROGATION CONCURRENTLY WITH PUBLIC SIGNING OF NEW TREATY. SHAH WOULD GET WHAT HE WANTS AND IRAQ WOULD SAVE FACE. ANY USG INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE AS FAR AS IRAQ CONCERNED. ALTHOUGH ABDUL BAQ' S MEETING WITH IRANIAN FORMIN IS ALREADY KNOWN TO SOME DIPLOMATS HERE, I INTEND TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT ONLY WITH TURKISH AMBASSADOR UNLESS INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE.
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